

# Key Points



1. Ex-offenders often hold onto antisocial attitudes after leaving the correctional system. These attitudes make it easy for them to continue antisocial behaviors, and create significant adjustment problems at work.

2. Most employers have an unspoken code of expectations that they seldom bother explaining to new workers. This code often conflicts with the thinking that ex-offenders have used throughout their lives.



3. Ex-offenders need more than rewards and punishments to successfully transition to work. They need help learning vital people skills and understanding employers' hidden code as well.

Cognitive Skills Instruction can help them learn the TOOLS. Cognitive Restructuring can challenge their antisocial RULES.

*This presentation was based upon concepts from the "Makin' It Work" curriculum, part of the successful "Workin' It Out" soft skills training programs. For further information about staff training in these classroom-based cognitive programs, contact:*

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# From Jails to Jobs

*Helping  
ExOffenders  
Find Success  
at Work*

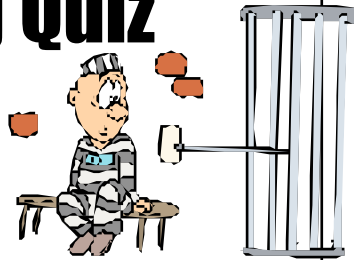


**Dr. Steve Parese**

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# Prison Slang Quiz

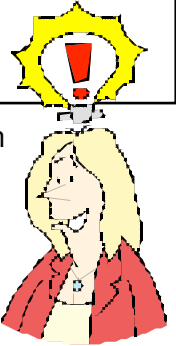
1. What is a Shank?
  - a. A piece of meat.
  - b. Part of a handcuff.
  - c. A handmade weapon.
  - d. A correctional officer.
2. What happens if a prisoner Clicks Up?
  - a. Gets promoted on a prison job.
  - b. Is assigned to a better cell.
  - c. Joins a prison gang.
  - d. Lights a cigarette when smoking is not permitted.
3. Who is Chester?
  - a. A prisoner who has spent so much time in prison that he cannot function in the outside world.
  - b. An officer who smuggles contraband into the institution.
  - c. A prisoner who avoids any hard work.
  - d. A child molester.
4. What happens when a prisoner is Riding Leg?
  - a. A prisoner forms a homosexual relationship with another.
  - b. A prisoner becomes friendly with staff to get a favor.
  - c. A prisoner fabricates a story to gain status with other prisoners.
  - d. A prisoner who has received contraband and is enjoying life.
5. Who is Sancho?
  - a. A correctional officer.
  - b. A prisoner who informs on others, a snitch.
  - c. A Latino prisoner.
  - d. The man having an affair with a prisoner's wife or girlfriend.



# COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING

## Teach the RULES

Cognitive Restructuring is most effective when antisocial behavior is due to entrenched antisocial beliefs or distorted perceptions.



## Uncovering Core Beliefs

Maria gets to work 30 minutes late, and her supervisor writes her up. Later that week, she has to stay 2 hours late to cover for a co-worker who doesn't get written up. Maria files a grievance with the district manager, claiming she was treated unfairly.



**Maria:** "She wrote me up, so I wrote her up! She only did it because she knows I need this job to get my daughter back. Well, @\$% her! I won't put up with it!"

**MARIA:** "I think I did the right thing because I believe that:"

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To benignly confront this reasoning, you might say:

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Hey Look! A Spot for Notes!

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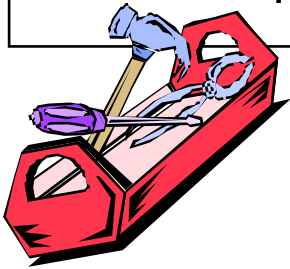
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# COGNITIVE SKILLS

## Teach the TOOLS



Cognitive Skills Instruction is most effective when antisocial behavior is due to a lack of prosocial skills.

## Identifying Skill Steps



Randy gets fired because he doesn't know how to accept criticism without arguing. He attends a class to help him deal with criticism more effectively. On the left side, brainstorm YOUR ideas about how to handle constructive criticism.

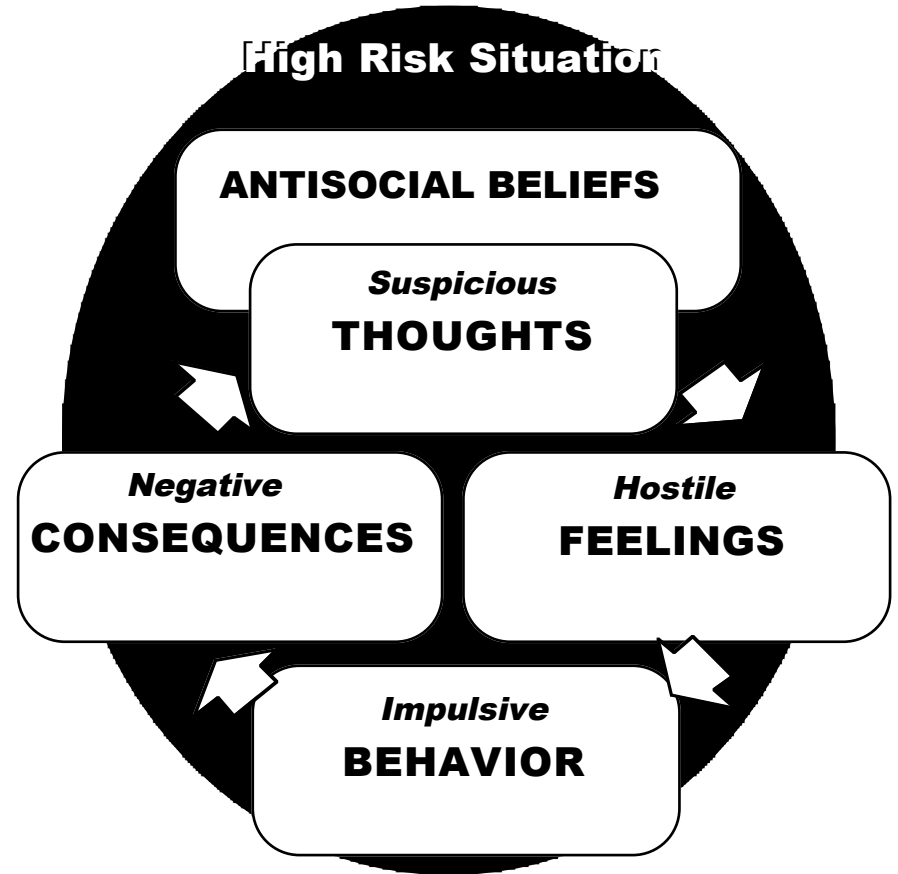
MY GROUP SAYS:

EXPERTS SAY:

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 1. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 3. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 5. _____ |

# AntiSocial Thinking Cycle

Our beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions determine our probable behavior in any given situation. In high risk situations, offenders rely on automatic antisocial thinking which provides short-term payoffs at the expense of long-term consequences.



Source: Bush, J. (1995, August). *Cognitive self change: A program manual*. Burlington, VT: Vermont Department of Corrections.

Describe a High Risk Situation which your ex-offenders might find themselves facing at work.

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# AntiSocial Thinking Traps

Addiction, violence, poverty and criminality often create self-centered patterns of thinking. These patterns make it easy for offenders to behave in ways that ultimately perpetuate their cycle of criminality and failure.

1. "I decide for myself what I will or won't do. No one TELLS me what to do."
2. "I don't let anyone get away with putting me down."
3. "I am who I am. I'm not going to put on a front to make someone else happy."
4. "You have a right to get even if people mess with you."
5. "Don't admit to ANYTHING unless you have no other choice."

# Employers' Hidden Code

In addition to their written policies and procedures, employers frequently have a set of unspoken rules and expectations which they simply assume new employees will understand and abide by.

- A. "Be courteous to customers, even if they are unpleasant to you."
- B. "Do what you are asked to do, even if you don't want to."
- C. "Accept constructive criticism without getting defensive about it."
- D. "Do your best to fit in. Don't look or act too different."
- E. "Don't cover up problems. If you made a mistake, at least be honest about it."

1. Randy gets a maintenance job at a major hotel chain. He has a disagreement with his supervisor when he asks him to cover his tattoos.



"What's wrong with showing my tattoos? I'm proud of them! I'm not going to pretend to be somebody different just to keep this stupid job."

Which Thinking Trap? \_\_\_\_\_

1. Randy's supervisor was confused about the incident with the tattoos.



"He doesn't understand that all those tattoos and piercings can scare off some of our more conservative guests. In our business, you have to keep up a certain image."

Which Employer Code? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Maria works as a clerk in a convenience store. Her 19-year-old supervisor Sarah tells her to clean up a spill in the back, and complains later that Maria never took care of it.

"I'm not going to let some KID tell me what to do. If she'd asked nicely, I might have said yes, but @\$% that!"



Which Thinking Trap? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Sarah, Maria's 19-year-old supervisor, has this to say:

"I know I'm only 19, but I've worked hard to get where I am. I shouldn't have to justify myself or walk on eggshells every time something needs to be done."



Which Employer Code? \_\_\_\_\_